

## **"Los Alamos Science Day"**

**February 13, 2001**

**Presented by John Gordon, Administrator, NNSA**

Thank you, John, for having us here today to listen, see, and talk about the spectacular scientific work, science, engineering, and technology that goes on at Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory.

And thank you for giving me an opportunity to not be in Washington now.

As many of you know, New Mexico has a certain hold on me. I spent nearly six years of my early career at Kirtland and at Sandia on weapons programs underway here at Los Alamos.

Much more important, and, as some of you have heard me say before, the missions of our laboratories is so valuable that I want to do everything I can to support the labs, and the very special people who actually do the work.

Today we showcase the advances in science and technology that take place here every day. This is the second in a series.

### **NNSA Update**

I thought I would spend a minute and tell you how NNSA is doing.

I've been on the job six months --- sometimes I can't remember when I wasn't on the job--- and we have some successes and some very positive trends.

Now we are not moving forward at anywhere near the pace of what I would like, but the slope is positive and monotonic.

Perhaps most important, we are starting to feel better about ourselves, about our mission, about our future.

We are, more or less, off the front pages of the newspapers --- although that may be very temporary. With an organization of our size and our focus on operations, there will always be issues and events, but the continual barrage and harangue seems largely behind us.

My greatest concern, when I took over, was morale and its effect on our work. Bad in large measure because of the beating we were taking in Washington and in the press.

Now, and I know this is fragile, but something is different. People here now don't want to be asked about morale. They are too busy doing their jobs. Doing the science that is our work and our mission.

We've had some success with Congress, getting this year the first real increase in funding since SSP began.

We have restored LDRD funding, eased travel limitation, eased foreign visitor issues, and are beginning to make sense of what we need to do better on security.

And we renewed the UC contract. This is one subject that will get some scrutiny in the papers, I suspect.

I tell our critics that this contract may be the single most important thing we could do to bolster morale and in turn support our mission.

The contract revisions are, at least, from NNSA's perspective, very positive in

strengthening the approach to managing the laboratories while retaining the very positive contributions the university makes to science broadly.

We are asking the university to strengthen its approach to management:

- by hiring a Vice President

- by reaching out for world class expertise in security and project management

- by being specifically accountable in overseeing large programs and,

- NNSA expects to take a much more pro-active role in working with the university to strengthen its performance.

This is critical. We will be measured by performance. Performance is what counts and we simply cannot stand for failures of performance in our big projects to undermine all we have done.

Looking ahead, which in Washington means looking at the budget, we are seeking a significant increase. With this increase we have three focus areas:

- The work on SSP and the increases needed to fund the major work on our tools, and frankly, to fund some problem areas including NIF and pit certification.

- Beginning to put weapons through the complex again, 60%. This is real work with plans and schedules, the kind of work that turns our minds away from morale issues.

- Our infrastructure initiative. We can no longer eat up our facilities to pay for our programs. CMR - TA-55

Now, the new administration is having trouble with the increases we are asking for, so I am going to return to D.C. a bit early to continue the defense.

This would be a good moment to comment on the new Secretary of Energy, Spenser Abraham. He has been simply great on the budget, strongly and vocally supporting our needs, above all the other priorities of DOE --- bullet proof vest.

And he wants us to succeed in every way. I have nothing to say but good things about Spenser Abraham.

But back to science day.

I hope with these events we do two things.

One, we remind ourselves, and, more importantly others, that while they are off finding fault with some aspects of our work, criticizing us publically; we are doing great science. Most of the work we will hear about today, in talks and poster sessions, was done during the worst of times here at Los Alamos. We must do better at publicizing and taking credit for the incredible contributions that are made here every day. I hope today's events contribute to that goal.

Second, we demonstrate the great science that goes on at a national security laboratory that contributes to so many area of American science and American economy.

The treasures that our national laboratories provide to the science and engineering necessary to preserve confidence in our nations nuclear deterrents. The work here helps detect, deter and control the spread of weapons of mass destruction. People know that.

Some, however do not appreciate the contribution we make across the board.

Moreover, those who do know may fear that the establishment of NNSA will build new barriers to scientific cooperation across organizational boundaries.

We must not let that happen.

I tell people that there are real reasons they should believe that NNSA supports reaching across boundaries to support scientific work:

It's the right thing to do

As good as the labs are, we no longer have a monopoly on the science to support our enterprise, we need to reach out for that new science

I need the work to enrich the professional experiences and growth of the individuals we want to attract and retain in our weapons related work

And, finally, I need the business to buffer the weapons' work and the weapons funding.

So we must work closely with the Office of Science to make certain we tear down barriers, not build them. And we celebrate partnerships with all the DOE labs. We recognize that we must maintain a solid fundamental science base. That spans from open unclassified research and experimentation, to the most closed restricted classified projects.

**Hamre Commission** - Concern about science and security operating together.

One of the things we have done to assist us in addresses this challenge is asked a very distinguished group from the science community and former members of government to join the "Science and Security commission." Dr. John Hamre, Former Deputy Secretary of Defense and now President of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington are leading the Commission. So you might have heard of it called the Hamre commission. The commission is helping us determine if we're looking at the right issues or problem areas, how we're processing that information and what our plan of action is to begin mitigating them. They are looking at the underlying issues.

We've brought together a broad spectrum of folks to assist Dr. Hamre who we feel really understand this. Burt Richter from Slack and a Nobel Prize Winner, Mim John from Sandia: we have a former Deputy Director of the FBI, a former Air Force Intelligence Officer, some other laboratory folks and a bunch in between. You'll see the Commission out and about the next few months visiting laboratories and talking to folks. They have already been to Los Alamos and Sandia. Please be open with these people if they should talk with you. We want to be able to effectively address

your issues and concern as well as those from outside our laboratories.

My main message to them and to all that it's not a matter of balance --- do both!

### **Wrap-up**

I know the strength of NNSA is in its laboratories --- like Los Alamos. I know the people here are dedicated to technical excellence. I know science, technology and engineering essential to maintain our nuclear stockpile requires scientists pushing the envelope of creativity and innovation to provide an intellectually stimulating laboratory environment. I ask your help to ensure we build bridges not impasses. We have a solid business reason for keeping the science open: to continue the scientific exchange programs and to attract world class talent by reaching across the boundaries.

I want to thank John again for the opportunity, you for your support and enthusiasm. We have some exciting times to look forward to in science at NNSA.